

*STONE COLD, HERR
OBERGRUPPENFÜHRER*

To Sylvia Plath

STONE COLD, HERR OBERGRUPPENFÜHRER

What the truce is all about? or about! I can't tell exactly. But here's what's going on. I'm publishing a book. So I have enough things to worry about whichever direction I go. I have a family to support and a child to raise. Who's to say I'm not fighting in Afghanistan? Bombs dropping everywhere: the economic crisis, the shutting out of controversial writing and the irony of our pathetic love affair with 'contrarians' on the lecture circuits, the cognoscenti's prize-winning committees, the hacks' newspaper slots and the Magi's lit and political journals and whore-streaked columns: yes, they ride the publishing world with the highest of professionalism, but they're just so many bombs falling on me. What exactly is the difference in the end-effect as a human being – to me I mean, or the hypothetical other who walks in my likeness?

I've wished for many years to set things straight, in one way or the other. It's happened in my joy-milks: my times of gladness, of inspired heat in my heart and freeness in my mind, like I could walk without tiring until time came to an end. There comes a then, of course, as there always does – when time does stop but I find myself tired because it is not the end of time. Meaning therefore: Tired of my money-getting method, my trade name as a computer programmer, tired of everything except my little family, and our Little Big Dreams. I'm no hero. I didn't even have the opportunity to stand against Ribbentrop and Heydrich (dead martyr) at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral in Prague.

I was born in America in the late sixties of the same 20th Century. Only months made the difference for the murders of King and Bobby Kennedy, I was hatching at the time... but I came out months after; a few, not many. With JFK, it was different. I came in on the same day he went out. It was just that it was years this time not months. Isn't that a joke? Just years.

Why am I organizing all of this crap? Amusement. Boredom. Tired of getting tired. In an attempt to wratch up some points. Animate that ghost-white on the screen. (O Lily that I could.) Anything. Anything I suppose. Just as long as it matters. Obergruppenführer Heydrich. Signature. Ss. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral. Desecrated.

Would it be a conceit to say that this is like programming? I have no idea. It seems that the Bible has been right though about things. Families are going against families. Fathers against sons, even more than sons against fathers, which is a prodigal element anyway. Do I have to clarify – and then mention – such things? I don't know. I have no idea. I don't know what the rules are. I don't think anyone does. I am sorry, but I am not: I am certain the poets have no clue. That doesn't even pose a question for me though, it doesn't beg. I'll not be slovenly at least here. I've got my title: Stone Cold. Stone. Cold. And very affectionate. I mean, me. I. Am very affectionate. Obergruppenführer. State. Your. Case. We are. No better. Than you. So. State. Your. Case. Don't be. Stone. Cold. We are here. To listen. We have. Always been. Don't. Despair. Obergruppenführer. You were just a simple man. You didn't mean it. So listen closely. To what I say. To what I say. And you'll see the remains of the Day. We'll revive it together. It's that simple. For a simple man. For You and I. Simple men. Shall we douse the mushroom cloud together? We shall, I agree. I agree. It's so easy. For a simple man. Like you. Like me. Like US. And of-A: A Nazi and a closet fag congressman: You never knew we could be so close, did you? Did you, Obergruppenführer? But we did. While Tolstoy decried the anti-Semitic pogroms, we listened to Theodore Herzl on Mozambique and North Africa. We gave the Jews a homeland. Now we can do what we want. With the impunity that you coveted. Just decades. Not even a century. It's slaughter now. Slaughter for riches and Lebensraum. Just like you wanted it. Just how you were preparing yourself to receive it. We all falter now, Obergruppenführer. It's your era now, we the living are the anachronisms, we just carry on your work. We're part of a machine. We've learned. We become accustomed. It's nothing to us. Your world which we built means nothing to us. We are just good builders, we are excellent history-slaves. We have no pride, we have only fear and loathing and boredom and building. You, Herr Obergruppenführer, you had passion. We murder in your name and it bores us. We even built a machine that changes your name at the right intervals so that we can build and kill in peace. That seems to be the only thing we like: the intervals. Dull passions, sleep, dull passions, sleep – in that ordering. It's regimental, I agree, but it doesn't seem so to us. Or if it does, which is more likely when our spleen is up (daemoniac America) or when our moods are down (our national pride rallied to a collective slough of despond: our murdered royalty, whether on the street or in a hotel kitchen, America never calluses the wounds, she's raw and romantic and dead by nostalgia), then it is spiritual: tea-bag poultice applied to our Oedipus-eyes (O E! O Oedipus! our sisters of mercy, the mole-bearing mourners who suck our eyes: where are they! where are they O E!) Obergruppenführer. Oedipus Rex. Defconfense: Antigone, she cried over. Storeyed-roots. She cried over. Storied roots. The Third Reich was a breeding ground for archeological nutcases. Mythically, they'd bleed the Storeyed-roots. Obergruppenführer. We carried on well. A little to the left, then a little bit to your Right. We're right behind you. O Sadness, O Woman with the long hair, cry for us. Mourn us. Mourn what we are. Antigone. Mourn your brothers.



Alex Patterson was born and raised in Oakland, California. He studied English at the University of California. He has traveled widely, having lived and worked in fifteen different countries across three continents. He lives in Europe. He did his thesis in a graduate course on James Joyce's *Ulysses*, partly under the conduction and aegis of Professor Emeritus Julian Boyd. He concentrated on Joyce's use of modality in *Ulysses*.

UC Berkley English professor Robert Hass – winner the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Awards – has written of Alex: "Alex Patterson is a very gifted young writer."